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BOSTON HARBOR

A Proposal for a Comprehensive Planning Program

September 18, 1969

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BOSTON HARBOR

INTRODUCTION

Boston Harbor represents a vast opportunity to the City of Boston for a variety of reasons and purposes. The Harbor's 30 square miles offer a physical setting for the City seldom equalled in this country. Within the Harbor, 870 acres of land on 19 islands represent opportunities for development as well as their obvious value for recreation. Ringing the Harbor are over 100 miles of waterfront land.

Despite the amenities and economic value of the Harbor to Boston, many of its potentials remain untapped, misunderstood and misused. The Harbor's waters are polluted to a point representing an intolerable waste of its potential commercial and recreational value. Most of its islands are either unused for any purpose whatever, or are used for dumping, sewage plants, and for obsolete public and institutional purposes. Hundreds of acres of vacant and underused waterfront land exist and miles of rotting piers contribute to the floating debris and further pollution of the Harbor and its beaches.

The improvement, development and future use of Boston Harbor is a vital concern to the City. In its capacity as planning agency for the City of Boston, the Boston Redevelopment Authority is undertaking a major comprehensive planning program for the Harbor and its shorelines.

Purpose of Harbor Study

The general purpose of the study will be to evaluate Boston Harbor as a development resource, and to propose development alternatives for its future use which will most effectively satisfy some of Boston's important needs, without destroying the harbor as a natural resource. For the purposes of the study, the harbor will include: (1) The water area north of Squantum Point including Deer Island and the Brewsters; (2) all waterfront land within that area including both port and other uses plus adjacent industrial land; and (3) the islands.

The specific purposes of the study will be:

1. to develop an overall statement of policies toward the future use of Boston,
2. to develop a comprehensive plan and program for the Harbor, and
3. to develop a series of position statements regarding immediate and critical issues facing the City concerning Boston Harbor.

Policies Statement on Future Use of Boston Harbor

Conflicts between development potentials for the Harbor exist and are inevitable. Expanding the City's economic base through massive industrial development in or around the Harbor may conflict with the City's need to respond to its critical housing shortage by developing new housing in the Harbor. The question of

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inadequate and vanishing open space in the region and the value of the Harbor for recreational purposes may conflict with objectives for intensive urban development in and around the Harbor. Finally, the overall concern for the ecological resources of the Harbor may conflict with development objectives for the Harbor.

Through a careful analysis of the resource values of the Harbor and an evaluation of the critical needs of the City, this study will, through a series of policies statements, set forth overall development objectives for Boston Harbor which will minimize these potential conflicts.

A Comprehensive Plan for the Harbor

Based upon the overall policies and objectives for the Harbor, a long-range plan for the Harbor will be developed. The plan will:

1. identify specific areas in and adjacent to the Harbor which are appropriate for development or non-development;
2. identify types of development which are appropriate and in the long-range best interests of the City; and
3. indicate the priority actions and programs which should be taken by the City to secure this development from public and private sources.

For this plan to be meaningful, several major planning studies will be undertaken immediately by the staff. Some will have

regional implications, and many will have city-wide implications. All studies, however, will be focused upon the Harbor and its potentials. The major planning studies to be undertaken are as follows:

1. Reconnaissance of Recent Studies and Existing Data

A shore comparative analysis of studies undertaken by various agencies and research groups separately or in connection with specific proposals for Harbor development.

2. Inventory and Evaluation of Harbor Resources

Based upon a considerable amount of work already completed, this study will identify and evaluate the Harbor's water and land resources.

3. Ecological Inventory and Evaluation

A comprehensive study to determine the nature of the Harbor's ecology and delineating the appropriate areas for development as the basis of the ecological effects.

4. Evaluation of Major Needs

A series of in-house studies in such functional areas as: housing, industrial development and recreation which would help determine the character of our major needs which could be satisfied by the Harbor development resources, and in long-range terms could provide the basis for continuing city-wide planning efforts of the BRA.

5. Evaluation of Specific Proposals

A series of studies as necessary and where timely to meet the immediate need for policy positions on Harbor and waterfront proposals by various agencies and private interests.

6. Impact Assessment of Airport and Seaport

An in-house continuation of the Port Study which would consider Logan Airport and Port of Boston as "outside events" having an impact on any development projects for the Harbor and requiring city policy positions on their development proposals.

Interim Statements on Critical Issues

Within the framework outlined above, the Harbor Study will from time to time produce statements for the BRA Director on critical issues facing the City regarding the Harbor. Although some studies are nearing completion now which will result in significant position statements, others will have to be undertaken.

Examples of issues which will be examined include:

1. Logan International

The economic benefits and the social and economic costs of unlimited expansion of Logan in East Boston are critical concerns of the City. The current Airport Study being undertaken by BRA staff and consultants will provide the first inputs into a specific position statement concerning the airport.

2. Boston Seaport

Boston's underused and declining seaport activities are of critical concern to the City in terms of employment, and full usage of the City's Port facilities. Statements will be forthcoming soon from BRA's seaport study currently underway.

3. East Boston

Recent developer interest in the East Boston waterfront indicates that the City should establish its position more clearly.

4. South Boston

Vacant piers, underused industrial land, and the future use of the South Boston Naval Annex are issues demanding definitive positions.

5. Charlestown Naval Base

The probable abandonment of the Naval Base in Charlestown represents an issue to the City in terms of its reuse potential.

6. Inner Harbor Islands

Although obviously part of any comprehensive plan for the Harbor, the future use of the inner Harbor islands is an immediate concern to the City. Some of these islands are accessible presently to the mainland and therefore are subject to more immediate development pressures.

7. Outer Harbor Islands

Little attention has been given to the 15 outer islands in the Harbor. Their potential for recreational or other use remains an important issue.

BRA Staffing and Private Participation in Harbor Study

A relatively small team of BRA staff can be assembled to pursue the Harbor Study and will call upon assistance of other BRA staff when needed. A concentrated effort is proposed here for the study, with interim statements produced periodically for the Director, and an outside time limit of approximately nine months for completion of the study.

Although the majority of work is to be carried out by BRA staff, it will be highly desirable to have assistance from non-BRA persons on specific issues. A few such persons might include experts from MIT Engineering, Hydrology, and Urban System Laboratories; the Oceanographic Institute at Wood's Hole; and consultants on specific development questions.

In addition, liaison and coordination should begin immediately and continue with selected state agencies, including for instance, the Department of Natural Resources and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

Finally, it is recommended that the BRA Director consider seriously the establishment of a select committee of five persons to be called the Boston Harbor Committee. The purpose in this recommendation is threefold. First, to involve and solicit the support of interested and influential private persons in this study effort. Second, the Committee could be useful in obtaining political support for the study and in promoting public relations. Finally, it is hoped that such a committee could be called upon for their private financial support of this undertaking. In addition to staff time from BRA, financial support will be needed for other aspects of this study, such as for any consultant assistance which is needed.

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

TO

FROM

DATE

SUBJECT

Phil Ziegler and Bob Loverud

Tom O'Brien

September 24, 1969

Boston Harbor Planning Program Proposal

I have just read the Boston Harbor Planning Program Proposal of September 18, 1969. There are a number of items which may make completion within nine months very difficult and failure to emphasize a new community in the harbor is, I believe, contradictory to Mr. Warner's wishes.

On the first score, the Community Renewal Program (CRP) and the industrial survey are heavily involved in housing and industrial development. We must work together on these issues. BDIC (Kinney O'Rourke), Mace Wenniger, Don Stone, and a team of interviewers working for Don under Mace must work with our industrial planner. Who is he? The CRP will definitely provide the basic information needed for an in-depth analysis of Boston's housing problems. Who is our housing planner?

On the second point, Mike Honey has been working for a year on a new community in the harbor. He had the able assistance of Mrs. Givot during the summer and has been in constant contact with MIT's new community study group. His very detailed analysis is almost complete and, given Mr. Warner's expressed interest in a new community, it seems essential that his work be central to your study.

cc: Don McInnes, James Drought, Mace Wenniger, Mike Honey, Dale Coxe, Bob Lurcott, Marcia Myers.

TO/ds